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ABSTRACT

This student workbook is intended for use in helping teenage and adult basic education (ABE) students reduce their anxiety over tests in general and over the General Educational Development (GED) test in particular. Exercises are provided to help students analyze and understand their feelings about and while taking tests, recall the childhood messages that they received that have led to their test anxiety, analyze their strengths and weaknesses, learn about and prepare for taking a test at their designated test site, practice and learn general strategies for taking multiple-choice tests, develop individual test-taking strategies, learn basic relaxation techniques, and develop a plan to handle their test anxiety. (MN)

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TEST ANXIETY

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TEST ANXIETY REDUCTION

Student Workbook

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These materials have been submitted to Dr. John Christopher, Chief of the Division of Adult Basic Education at the Pennsylvania Department of Education. He will submit copies to AdvancE and that agency will be responsible for further dissemination.

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HOW I FEEL ABOUT TAKING TESTS

THINGS I FELT WHILE TAKING THE TEST

Check the things that applied to you.

__I felt hungry.

__I felt like I wanted a cigarette.

__I felt like I had to go to the bathroom.

__My heart felt like it was pounding.

__My palms got cold and sweaty.

__I felt like I was sweating all over.

__My breathing got faster.

__I could not sit still and felt like I needed to move around.

__I got a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach.

__My shoulders and neck felt tight.

__I started biting my nails/lips.

__I started getting a headache.

__I kept wanting to change my answers.

__I could not think -- my mind blanked out.

__I did not care -- I'm going to flunk anyway.

__I got angry at the people making me do this.

__My mind kept wandering and I could not concentrate.

__I felt pressured to prove to everyone that I am good enough to be in the program.

__I was afraid that others would think I'm stupid if I did not pass this test.

__I felt stupid.

__I felt like giving up and leaving.

__I felt like everyone was watching me.

Other Things I Felt:

(Please list)

THINGS I HEARD WHILE GROWING UP

(Verbal and Non-Verbal Childhood Messages)

Check the things that applied to you.

__"You're not as smart as you think you are."

__"You can do better than that."

__"Do everything perfectly."

__"You're stupid. You're dumb."

__"My son/daughter is the best, the smartest kid in the whole world."

__"Other kids won't like you if you're too smart."

__"You can't do that because you're a girl/boy/Black/Latino."

__"I'm counting on you to make me proud of you."

__"You'll never be good enough."

__"You don't know what you're doing."

__"You're too nervous. You'll never learn to relax."

__"You never do anything right."

__"You don't know what you're talking about."

__"I love you only if you do well."

__"Act stupid and someone will do things for you."

__"Be smart to impress people."

__"Anything you do is great."

__"I only love your achievements. If you stop achieving, I'll stop loving you."

__"Don't make a mistake."

__"I need your achievements so I can brag about you and boost my own ego."

__"Do well to get approval, but I won't give you any."

__"You're just like your father/mother, and he/she is a bum."

__"The world is a dangerous, scary place, so stay home."

__"People are out to get you, so don't let them get the best of you."

__"Don't trust others."

__"Do things for people so they will like you."

__"You're a failure."

__"No matter what you do, I'll find something wrong with it."

__"It's your fault that I'm unhappy."

__"You cause me problems."

__"Others can do much better than you."

__"You're not worthy of my attention."

__"You don't deserve anything good."

__"You should be grateful."

__""You'll always be the way you are. You'll never change."

__"Life would be so beautiful without you."

__"You can't do anything right."

__"It is not OK to compete with your father/mother. It is not OK to surpass him/her."

__"You don't deserve anything just for being who you are."

__"Don't do better than me, and I'm not good at anything."

__"I don't care what you think."

Other Things I Heard:

(Please list)

I AM A PERSON WHO:

TEST SITE CHECKLIST

A. Know the testing site

Make a dry run! Actually make a trip down to the testing site to find out the following:

1) How are you going to get there? If you are going to use public transportation - which bus, train, or subway are you going to take? At which stop do you get off? What about transfers? And, most importantly, how long does it take you to get there?
2) Where is the building? On which floor is the room? Upstairs? Downstairs? Which room?
3) Where will you sit? Away from a window? Where is the lighting good? Is it better for you to sit in the front, back, or middle? Can you see the clock?
4) Be sure to figure out how long it takes you to get from your front door to the testing room. That way you can arrive early.

B. Before the test

1) Be prepared. Know what kind of test you will be taking. Do they supply pencils and paper for you? Is it better to guess at answers or not? Is it multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, or essay?
2) Get plenty of sleep before-hand. You can concentrate better if you are rested.
3) Don't cram! It is not worth the tension and missing sleep.
4) No drugs before hand. No downers. No uppers. All of these affect your ability to concentrate, and none of them help. Go easy on the coffee, or skip it entirely.

C. At the testing site on the day of the test

1) Arrive a little early, so you have time to find a good seat and can relax. But, don't get there too early; you will have more time to get nervous.

2) Look over the room to pick the best seat for yourself. Sit away from potential distractions.

Do not sit near a window if you like to look out of windows.

Do not sit near a door, a friend, or an attractive person.

Make sure you can see the clock!

3) If you do not understand the instructions, then ask questions.

4) Be aware of time allotments. How much time do you have for the test? How many questions are on the test?

For example: If a test is 1 hour long and there are 40 questions in total, then you should be at question #20 after one-half hour has passed. Watch the clock!

5) Pace yourself. Make good use of the time.

6) Relax. Do your best! That is all you can do!

MY TEST SITE

1. I am going to take my test at _____.
(testing site location)

2. I will get there by _____.
(method of transportation)

Answer #3 or #4.

3. Transportation by car

   a. Driver:_____.

   b. I will meet the driver at_____at_____.
   (location) (time)

   c. Driver needs directions:_____.
   (yes or no)

   d. Is parking available:_____.
   (yes or no)

   e. It will take _____to arrive at the testing site.
   (length of time)

4. Public Transportation

   a. I will take_____at_____to_____.
   (which bus, train, etc.) (time) (location)

   b. Do I need to transfer?_____. To which bus, train, etc._____?
   (yes or no)

   c. I will get off at _____.
   (location)

   d. It will take_____to arrive at the testing site.
   (length of time)

5. The name of the building is_____and is located at _____.

6. I will take my test at _____.
(time)

7. I like to sit_____.
(near or away from a window; front, back, middle of room)

8. I will make a dry run on _____.
(date)

Answer Analysis I

1. Which of the following best states the main idea of the passage?

   1) When supply is greater than demand, a surplus is created.

   2) Natural resources alone determine how many goods can be produced.

   3) Demand is the only factor in determining production levels.

   4) Every nation has an overabundance of labor.

   5) Laborers are called human resources.

2. Which of the following best describes the earliest stage of Community succession?

   1) Only lower level forms of life can survive in a new environment.

   2) All species of animals within an ecosystem must interact with each other.

   3) A group of animals successfully adapts to a new environment.

   4) Birds are constantly threatened by natural hazards.

   5) Higher level forms of life cannot begin a new community.

3. The main purpose of this passage is to --

   1) Contrast plant and animal survival in tropical climates.

   2) Demonstrate how life forms adapt to new environments.

   3) Explain survival techniques for tropical climates.

   4) Illustrate how all plants adapt to tropical environments.

   5) Show how animals can live in tropical climates.

4. Which of the following would be the most appropriate title for a passage on immigration to America?

   1) Irish immigrants and the potato famine.

   2) Chinese immigrants build railroads.

   3) America -- The Melting Pot.

   4) Industry needs new Labor Force.

   5) Immigration and Urban Growth.

5. As referred to in the passage, the "Connecticut Compromise" was --

   1) A conflict between Connecticut and the other twelve colonies.

   2) A treaty between the United States and England.

   3) A law forbidding additional settlements in New England.

   4) An agreement which created the House of Representatives and the Senate.

   5) An apology from Connecticut to the other twelve colonies.

GENERAL STRATEGIES FOR TAKING MULTIPLE CHOICE TESTS

1. Plan time for each question according to the length of the test and the time allowed.
2. Read the question carefully. Make sure you understand what the question is asking you.
3. Look for key words in the question. Then you can look at all the choices to see which one best answers the question.
4. Look at all of the choices. Read through all of the choices before you decide which one is best. You want to pick the best possible answer, not just an OK answer.
5. See if any two of the choices are repeating similar information, or are saying the same thing. Remember that there will be only one best answer.
6. See if any choice is unclear in meaning. The best answer will be a direct response to the question.
7. Be aware of absolutes, and beware of them. Watch out for words like "all", "none", "everyone", "no one", "never", "always", etc.
8. Choices that are longer tend to be correct if they answer the question.
9. First answer those questions that you definitely know.
10. Do not skip around, but do leave until last the more difficult questions for which you will need more time.
11. Never give up -- if you can make a good guess, stab at the answer and move on. If you have no idea what the answer is, then skip it, circle its number, and go back to it later. Sometimes the clue to the correct answer for one question can be found in another.
12. If you have guessed at an answer, then do not go back and change it. Your first answer is usually right (unless you made a math mistake). Trust your first impulse if you are unsure.

Answer Analysis II

1. Which of the following best states the main idea of the passage?

   1) When supply is greater than demand, a surplus is created.

   2) Natural resources alone determine how many goods can be produced.

   3) Demand is the only factor in determining production levels.

   4) Every nation has an overabundance of labor.

   5) Laborers are called human resources.

2. Which of the following best describes the earliest stage of Community succession?

   1) Only lower level forms of life can survive in a new environment.

   2) All species of animals within an ecosystem must interact with each other.

   3) A group of animals successfully adapts to a new environment.

   4) Birds are constantly threatened by natural hazards.

   5) Higher level forms of life cannot begin a new community

3. The main purpose of this passage is to --

   1) Contrast plant and animal survival in tropical climates.

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   4) An agreement which created the House of Representatives and the Senate.

   5) An apology from Connecticut to the other twelve colonies.

Answers and Explanations to Answer Analysis

1. (1) - Answers (2), (3), and (4) use absolutes -- "alone", "only", and "every". Answer (5) is a definition (not an idea).

2. (3) - Community succession are the key words. Answers (1) and (2) are absolutes -- "only" and "all". Answer (4) refers to only one species and is too specific. Answer (5) does not answer the question on community succession.

3. (2) - Answers (1), (3), and (5) all repeat similar information. Answer (4) is too specific and contains an absolute -- "all".

4. (3) - Immigration to America are the key words. Answer (3) is the only one that applies. None of the others have to do with immigration in general. They are too specific.

5. (4) - Compromise is the key word in the question. Answers (1), (2), (3), and (5) use the words "conflict", "treaty", "law", and "apology". None of these mean "compromise". A compromise is an agreement.

INDIVIDUAL TEST-TAKING STRATEGIES

A. Reading Comprehension Test

1. Ignore instructions which tell you to read the passage and then answer the questions. Read the questions first so you know what you are looking for as you read.

   If you are looking for specific facts - you just need to skim.

   If you need to draw conclusions or make inferences - you need to read the entire passage.

2. Does the answer you choose answer the question - all parts of it?

3. Do not add any facts - Base your answers entirely on facts contained in the reading passage. Even if you know something about the subject, this is a test of your ability to read and understand a given passage. Applying your outside knowledge can only cost you points, unless instructions specifically tell you to apply it.

4. Forget your own conclusions - Keep reminding yourself that you are being tested on your understanding of the words, sentences, facts and ideas in the passage - nothing more unless specifically asked for. If you think the author's facts or conclusions are wrong, keep that to yourself; answer questions based on the author's facts and the author's conclusions. Especially if you know something about the subject, read carefully. Students lose points because they jump to conclusions based on their own throught. Be sure you can point to the reading passage that supports the conclusions reached in the answer you want to mark.

B. Writing Skills Test

1. In the Sentence Correction and Usage sections, the errors are found only in the underlined parts. These mistakes will most likely involve grammar rules. The parts not underlined will help you decide what the errors are. If a verb is plural and not underlined, then the subject must be plural also. If parallel construction is needed, the first part of the sentence determines the pattern unless it is underlined.

C. Social Studies and Science Tests

1. Most of these tests involve your reading skills, therefore use the same strategies you would use in the Reading Comprehension Test.

D. Math Test

1. Organize your scratch work!

   This is important!

   Number your problems so you can find them easily if you need to go back and check your work. Be neat so you can read your work. Don't just do the work anywhere - up, down, and sideways on the paper, or wherever there is a blank space. It will be easier for you to go back and check your arithmetic if you can find it!

2. Do not guess at an answer. Work the problem through.
3. Do not look at the choices until after you have solved the problem yourself.
4. Draw a diagram or sketch of the problem to help you figure out what to do.
5. Substitute round whole numbers in place of fractions or decimals in order to decide which operation to use.

   Example: Mary has a board $5\frac{1}{2}$ feet long. She wants to make shelves $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet long. How many shelves can she make?

Substitute whole numbers:

Mary has a board 6 feet long. She wants to make shelves 2 feet long. How many shelves can she make?

Answer: $6 \div 2 = 3$

So, $5\frac{1}{2} \div 1\frac{1}{4}$ = answer.

6. Write down any formula you may use.
7. Check your work by re-doing the problem from the <u>beginning</u>. Sometimes you may be able to substitute your answer back into the problem (especially for algebra problems).
8. If you really can't do the problem, and if you have time, try working the problem backward. Start with each of the choices and find out which one works.
9. Make sure the units are the same. If not, then change them to the same units. (Change ¢ to $, feet to inches, yards to feet, and so on.)
10. Make sure you copy the numbers <u>accurately</u> onto your scratch paper.

MATH WORD PROBLEMS

1. Read the problem <u>all the way through</u>. Read slowly and carefully. Then <u>re-read</u> it.
2. Look at the question at the end of the problem so you know exactly <u>what</u> you need to find. Make sure you know what the question is asking for.
3. Look for key words which will tell you which operation(s) to use. See "key word" sheet for examples.
4. Is more than one step needed? If so, which step comes first? In other words, <u>how</u> are you going to solve the problem?
5. What information is given? What numbers or facts do you need to find out the unknown information?

6. Now solve the problem completely. Work carefully to avoid arithmetic mistakes.
7. Re-read the question. Does your answer answer the question? Does it make sense? Is it too large or too small?
8. Only after you have solved the problem yourself should you look at the answer choices. Remember that the test - makers have figured out all the mistakes that people usually make, and have included these answers along with the one correct answer. Just because your answer is there, does not make it right. So, only look at the choices after doing steps 1 - 7.
9. If your answer is not among the choices, check your arithmetic by re-doing it.

KEY WORDS FOR MATH PROBLEMS

Clues for Addition

altogether

total

increased

more

Clues for Subtraction

left

remain (remaining)

difference

decreased

less

fewer

Clues for Multiplication

times

at

(fraction) of

Clues for Division

divide

each

equal parts

Clues for Percents

part: is

this is, this was

whole: of

total amount

original amount

percent: %

rate

RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

1. Exercise - any form you like on a regular basis
   a. Jogging
   b. Swimming
   c. Weight lifting
   d. Walking
   e. Aerobics
   f. Calisthenics, etc.
2. Massage

   Rub those tense spots in your neck, shoulders, fingers, jaw, and back to relieve immediate tension.
3. Breathe properly
   a. Take long deep breaths filling your entire stomach, diaphragm, lungs, throat and mouth areas.
   b. Hold breath as long as you can.
   c. Let air out slowly.
   d. Relax.
   e. Repeat exercise for 5-10 minutes daily -- prererably at bed time.
   f. Breathing properly is a central key to overcoming test anxiety.
4. Tense and Relax
   a. Close your eyes.
   b. Lie down if you can.
   c. Put feet flat on the floor if you are sitting up.
   d. Begin tensing toes. Hold as long as you can. Breathe. Relax.
   e. Next, tense whole foot. Hold. Breathe. Relax.
   f. Next, tense calf muscles in your leg. Hold. Breathe. Relax

g. Continue up the body in this way to include trunk, fingers, hands, arms, shoulders, neck, and face.

h. Remember to breathe properly.

5. Yoga

Yoga is a system in which people do exercises to gain control over their bodies and their minds. These exercises help people to relax and feel good. It also sharpens their minds. Yoga was developed by the Hindus of India.

6. Transcendental Meditation (TM)

TM is a type of meditation where a person chants a "mantra" (a code-word known only to the individual; the word is rhythmic and triggers relaxation). Through this meditation, people relax their bodies in order to feel calm and to stimulate their creativity.

7. Biofeedback

Biofeedback is a method of getting information about involuntary bodily processes from machines. People receive information about their heartbeat, blood pressure, and brain waves. They learn to control these processes consciously as they watch the monitors.

HOW I WILL HANDLE MY TEST-ANXIETY

(Refer back to anxiety behaviors on page 2)

1. When I feel/think _____,
   I will _____.
2. When I feel/think _____,
   I will _____.
3. When I feel/think _____,
   I will _____.
4. When I feel/think _____,
   I will _____.
5. When I feel/think _____,
   I will _____.
6. When I feel/think _____,
   I will _____.
7. When I feel/think _____,
   I will _____.
8. When I feel/think _____,
   I will _____.
9. When I feel/think _____,
   I will _____.
10. When I feel/think _____,
    I will _____.

EVALUATION

1. I found this course to be

   __a. extremely helpful

   __b. somewhat helpful

   __c. not helpful at all

2. Three things I learned from this course are

   a.

   b.

   c.

3. What I liked best in this course was

4. What I liked least in this course was

5. Other comments.....